

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, KS, US, KN

SUBJ: FURTHER KOREAN PRESS REACTION TO CARTER'S ELECTION

REF: SEOUL 8837

SUMMARY: WHAT PRESIDENT -ELECT CARTER IS LIKE AND WHAT HIS
KOREAN POLICY IS LIKELY TO BE, PARTICULARLY REGARDING PRESENCE

OF US TROOPS IN KOREA, CONTINUES TO DOMINATE
PRESS ATTENTION IN ROK. WITH PASSAGE OF TIME, AND HELPFUL
IN-
DICATIONS FROM JAPAN AND ONE CARTER ADVISOR, HOWEVER, TONE
OF PUBLIC COMMENTARY SEEMS TO HAVE CALMED DOWN, AND NEWS-
PAPERS ARE NOW EMPHASIZING PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL
US-ROK TIES. BEFORE ELECTION, NORTH KOREANS AT PANMUNJOM
EXPRESSED INTEREST IN CARTER'S POLICIES AND ELECTION
PROSPECTS, BUT THEY HAVE NOT DONE SO SINCE ELECTION.
END SUMMARY.

1. ELECTION OF JIMMY CARTER AS PRESIDENT HAS CONTINUED

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TO DRAW MOST INTENSIVE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE IN KOREA OF

ANY FOREIGN NEWS TOPIC IN LAST THREE YEARS. EDITORIALS AND FEATURE ARTICLES FRANKLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CARTER'S CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY OF WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS FROM KOREA "STUNNINGLY SHOCKED KOREAN PEOPLE." WITH MORE TIME TO REFLECT THOUGH, TONE OF PRESS REACTION HAS CALMED FROM INTENSE NERVOUSNESS PRIOR TO AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER ELECTION (REFTEL). FONMIN PAK TESTIFIED BEFORE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THAT, IN VIEW OF PRESENCE OF MUTUAL SECURITY PACT, HE EXPECTED "NO CHANGE IN BASIC US POLICIES TOWARD ROK." SEVERAL PRESS COMMENTARIES HAVE ALLUDED TO CARTER'S FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE (11/4), POINTING OUT THAT HIS PLEDGE TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH US ALLIES AND TO ABIDE BY US COMMITMENTS OVERSEAS ALSO APPLIES TO ROK. COMMENTARIES ALSO NOTE THAT CARTER DID NOT, HOWEVER, DENY POSSIBILITY OF US WITHDRAWAL.

2. MOST COMMENTARIES NOW STRESS HOPES FOR MAINTENANCE OF "TRADITIONAL TIES BETWEEN US AND ROK." SEVERAL POINT OUT THAT IDEA OF WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS IS NOT EXCLUSIVELY CARTER'S, BUT IS ALSO IMPLICIT IN NIXON DOCTRINE, AND THAT CARTER HAS PLEDGED FULL CONSULATIONS WITH JAPAN AND ROK. OPPOSITION NDP HEAD YI CH'OL-SUNG POINTED OUT IN TONGA ILBO ARTICLE NOVEMBER 6 THAT ISSUE OF WITHDRAWAL IS QUESTION OF "METHOD AND TIMING," NOT FINAL RESULT. YI CALLED ON US TO RID ITSELF OF ISOLATIONISM AND "EVALUATE KOREAN SITUATION CORRECTLY."

3. TONGA ILBO, IN EDITORIAL 11/9, ADDED THAT PRESENCE OF US TROOPS IN KOREA IS "INSTRUMENTAL IN MAINTAINING STABILITY" BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IN EUROPE, IN ADDITION TO THAT ON KOREAN PENINSULA. ALSO, PRESENCE IN ROK GIVES US INFLUENCE OVER JAPAN, TO PREVENT ITS NUCLEAR REARMAMENT, AND CAN HELP RESTORE TRUST OF FREE WORLD IN US RELIABILITY. WRITERS CALLED ON JAPAN TO CONVINCE US TO KEEP TROOPS HERE.

4. SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS MADE IN JAPAN, ESPECIALLY THOSE BY PRIME MINISTER MIKI AND MARUKAMA, VICE-DIRECTOR, SELF-DEFENSE AGENCY, WERE WELCOMED BY ROKS. PAPERS WERE ALSO CONFIDENTIAL

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QUICK TO SEIZE ON SANKEI SHIMBUN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW NOVEMBER 11 WHICH QUOTED PHILIP H. TREZISE, ONE OF CARTER'S ADVISORS, AS STATING THAT CARTER WILL MAINTAIN US FORCES IN ROK "AS LONG AS MILITARY THREAT FROM NORTH KOREA CONTINUES."

5. REFERENCE TO OTHER ASPECTS OF US POLICY TOWARD ROK WHICH MIGHT CHANGE HAS BEEN RARE. YI CH'OL-SUNG

CONCLUDED ARTICLE IN TONGA ILBO WITH HOPE US WILL
"NOT LINK ITS SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO INTERVENTION IN
INTERNAL AFFAIRS," BALANCING THIS WITH VAGUE CALL FOR
KOREANS TO "MAKE EFFORTS TO ACCEPT US ADVICE TO PROMOTE
FREE DEMOCRACY."

6. NORTH KOREA: FOR SOME WEEKS PRIOR TO US ELECTION,
AT INTERPRETER MEETINGS OF MILITARY ARMISTICE COMMISSIONS,
NORTH KOREANS (NK) EXPRESSED INTENSE INTEREST IN BOTH
CARTER'S PROGRESS TOWARD ELECTION AND IN POLICY WHICH
CARTER MIGHT PURSUE IF ELECTED. THERE HAS BEEN ONE
MEETING SINCE ELECTION, BUT NK'S DID NOT INQUIRE ABOUT
CARTER OR LIKELY CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ELECTION.
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